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## Provenance: An Aesthetic Window for Investigating Professional Practice

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## **Provenance: An Aesthetic Window for Investigating Professional Practice**

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### **Abstract**

The study of professional practice is but one of many foci within Organisational inquiry. A discourse devoted to professional practice, currently typified by ideological critique along with interpretations of professionalism (Evetts, 2014), emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and evolved through different writing phases. The discourse predominantly identified literature informing professional practice investigation.

A feature of the professional practice discourse is its reference to “turns” or shifts in the ways in which professional practice inquiry is undertaken. In the 1980s, the “reflective turn” discussed the different tools and processes available for professionals to reflect on their practice. Later, in the early 2000s, the “practice turn” explored the common trend of person-centred practice investigation. Discussion around art-based tools to raise consciousness about professional practices, sometimes referred to as aesthetic approaches, has emerged as a new agenda in contemporary professional practice investigation and can be recognised as an “aesthetic turn”.

This paper affirms emergence of an aesthetic turn in organisational inquiry and posits inclusion of “Provenance”, an aesthetic tool, as a window into investigating and understanding professional practices. Provenance is traditionally associated with artefacts, illuminating the history of a given artefact. Applied to professional practice, Provenance identifies key events which have informed the development of a practice and thus provides insights into the contemporary outplaying of a practice.

The paper begins with an illumination of the study of professional practice and focusses on one feature of the history in its references to “turns”. The paper then introduces a notion of Provenance using examples from Literature and Sculpture. Finally the paper posits worth of Provenance in Organisational Inquiry and draws attention to the examples in the earlier illumination of professional practice as examples of Provenance in Organizational Inquiry.

**Keywords:** Provenance, professional art practice, professional business practice, reflective practice

## Provenance: An Aesthetic Window for Investigating Professional Practice

Studying professionals as they undertake their day-to-day practices is an important element of organisational inquiry. The idea of professions is believed to have started in the *studia generalia*, the professional schools initiated by medieval Emperor Charlemagne to educate administrators for his 13<sup>th</sup> century kingdom (Dunbabin, 1999). Following a 19<sup>th</sup> century surge in identification of professions, discussion about professionalism appeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Dingwall and Lewis, 1983). Over time, these conversations constituted a discourse in its own right. Some texts within the discourse have themselves used historical tracing to show how professionalism has been informed and shaped.

Historical analysis of professional practice discourse remains a feature in contemporary organisational inquiry. Evetts' (2011) *Sociological analysis of professionalism* and Saks' (2012) argument to revisit an earlier professional practice debate about what constitutes professionalism, both utilise historical analysis or chronological organisation of key literature. Evetts' (2011) *Sociological Analysis of Professionalism*, revised as a chapter for a much larger text on professional practice research (Evetts, 2014), explored the history and development of professionalism in its role as a category of occupational work. Evetts (2011) drew attention to changes in the notion of professional status as well as the increasing number of occupations describing themselves as professional. Elaborated in the later expanded chapter, Evetts' (2014) historical view is presented as a three phase model with the first phase focussed on defining professionalism, the second phase critiquing it, and the third phase amalgamating the two predecessors of definition and ideological critique. Her historical analysis focussed on the notion of professionalism. Saks (2012) similarly wrote to the idea of defining a profession, endeavouring to situate this agenda historically in the discourse associated with professional practices. Saks (2012) also posited a three phase model which centred on a phase he labelled the "Taxonomic phase". This central phase was preceded by a definitional phase and followed by a critical phase. Saks (2012) focussed on re-valuing the exercise of seeking to define professionalism. Both examples positioned their author's views about professional practice within discursive historical contexts, positing that discussions around professionalism are long standing and by understanding these histories, one can better understand contemporary issues.

The earliest writing about professionalism emerged at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both Saks (2012) and Evetts (2014) described this phase as being focussed on codifying or defining professionalism. Questions, such as "what is a profession?" and "what is not a profession?" led to six distinguishing features of professional practice: "a *fulltime occupation, ... commitment to a calling, ....formal organisation, ....esoteric but useful knowledge or skills acquired through training or education, ....an orientation towards service, ... and autonomy*" (Moore and Rosenblum, 1970, 5-6). Evetts (2014), commenting on this phase in the discourse, observed a common thread that professionalism was difficult to define. Evetts (2014, 31) suggested such definitional work may have been misguided in comparison to studies of power within professionalism. Friedson (1983, 23), similarly reviewing earlier writing phases, identified a benefit of early attempts to define professionalism that they raised awareness of different usages for the term "professionalism"; one usage referred to particular institutional and ideological traits in a small set of established professions; a second usage involved distinguishing certain occupations on the basis of the practitioners' educational status rather than by their skills. This distinction helped to explain why defining professionalism was so problematic.

*The Professions* (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933) is an example of early definitional writing about professional practice (Evetts, 2011). Saks (2012) located *The Professions* in writing that

preceded his identified "Taxonomic Approach". Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) initially used a notion of "professionalism" based on Legal and Medical occupations, both of which had institutional and ideological traits. As they explored emergent professions such as Engineering, Architecture, Education and the Arts, they shifted their notion of professionalism into a broader definition of occupations that distinguished practitioners by educational status rather than by skill sets. Data for the Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) study arose out of the questions "what do members of this profession do?" and "how does one become a member of the professions?" Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) attempted to include historical grounding for the various professions, but commented (1933) on paucity of information about histories of several professional organisations. Their study was motivated by their perception that professionalism was a deficit area of study compared to the then popular research into unions.

Both Evetts (2011) and Saks (2012) referred to professionalism literature in the 1950s and 60s as representing a later writing phase where the focus shifted from examining individual professions, as Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) had done, towards identifying a general concept of professionalism. Saks (2012, 2) described the 1950s and 60s phase as providing examples of the "Taxonomic approach", and representing attempts to define professionalism in terms of taxonomies. In his view, the taxonomic contributions were more significant in establishing definitions of professionalism and understanding what it constituted than had previous writers, such as Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933). Both Evetts (2011) and Saks (2012) suggested that Parsons' (1952) *The Social System* and Hughes' (1958) *Men and their work* were good examples of the 50's and 60s professionalism literature. These same texts were also identified by Dingwall and Lewis (1983, 1) who suggested they represented the starting point for sociological study of professions. Evetts (2011) singled out Hughes' (1958) writing as instigating ethnographic studies of professional practice, a research form which later dominated the discourse.

Parsons' (1952) treatise was a theory of modern Sociology, but at its heart (pp. 429-30) he described the "ideal" case based on the medical profession. This case demonstrated interrelationships between different elements in a social system. Parsons chose the medical profession because of research already undertaken and availability of literature. The example also provided a strong metaphor for a healthy social system that involved healthy participants. Parsons' (1952, 434) medical practitioner model was positioned within a sub-class of occupational roles thus reflecting elements of taxonomies. Bryan Turner (Parsons, 1991, xxii), editor of the revised edition of *The Social System*, referred to the strong influence the medical profession had played in Parsons' formulation of a theory of society.

Hughes (1958, 23) described his *Men and their work* as an essay. From the outset, in contrast to Parsons' (1952) *the Social System*, Hughes focussed on professional practices. Hughes (1958, 35), like Parsons (1952), used the medical profession as an example and made specific references to the Physician. There are examples of taxonomies when Hughes (1952, 32-34) locates the idea of a Professional within a broader hierarchy of Mission, Profession, Enterprise, Arts, Trades and Jobs. Hughes (1958), more so than Parsons (1952), referred to other professions of Law, Psychology, Engineering and Sociology.

Saks (2011) and Evetts (2012) both refer to a wave of writing informed by the Critical Theorists – for example Friere (1986) and Habermas (1987) – that they positioned in their respective models as following early writing attempts to define professionalism. This critical writing questioned embedded assumptions of the inherent worth of professionalism. Authors, for example Abbott (1988), criticised professionalism, suggesting that it was self-serving and designed to monopolise work and dominate occupations.

Evetts (2014) suggested a phase following the critical period that amalgamated the definitional focus of earlier writing and the critical phase, and focussed on what professionalism meant (Evetts, 2011). Friedson (2001) was a good example of a writer in this phase and Evetts (2011, 9) suggested he reintroduced a positive view of professionalism in contrast to the earlier Critical theory views. Saks (2012, 5) similarly referred to Friedson (1986), citing how his writing illuminated the socio-political elements of the discourse and initiated gender discussions of professionalism, as well as identifying regulatory differences between State and Federal bodies that accredited professional practice.

Friedson's (1989, 425) *Theory and Professions* defined a profession as "a kind of occupation whose members control recruitment, training and the work they do". This definition, based on three criteria, resonated with an observation made by Abbott (1988) that one of the outcomes from the shifts and turns in the discourse was a reduction in the distinguishing features of professional practice from six to three: esoteric knowledge applied to particular cases, the use of systems of instruction and training and gate-keeping entry limitations for professions in the form of pre-requisites and examinations. Friedson (1989, 430) also posited

*The most important question to ask about professions is how and why their members do what work they do the way they do, which leads us to the analysis of professional work itself and its organization into professional practice.*

This question typified the ways in which professional practice was investigated in the 1980s, signifying a stronger emphasis on analysing the rationale for work identified as professional. This type of question is what Evetts (2010) had recognised in Friedson's writing that elicited her comment that he had got to the heart of what professionalism *meant*. Friedson (1989, 431) also drew attention to emerging ethnographic studies of professional practices as well as the role played by university professional schools in providing knowledge that helped distinguish a profession from a craft. Friedson's (1989) comments coincided with growth in university courses designed to educate professionals in different disciplines.

### **"Turns" in study of professional practice**

A feature of the professional practice discourse is its reference to "turns" or shifts in the ways in which professional practice inquiry is undertaken.

Schatzki (2001, 11), in his discussion about lack of coherence or unification in study of professional practice, introduced the notion of a "practice turn" and posited that this turn introduced a people-centred agenda into the study of professional practice. Schatzki (2001, 11) used the term "embodied" to describe this central core of the field of studying practice, clarifying his use of the term by suggesting (2001, 17) it was

*rooted in the realization that the body is the meeting points both of mind and activity and of individual activity and social manifold.*

The term "practice turn" was adopted by other professional practice writers, such as Boud (2010) who also referred to an earlier "turn" represented by the 1980s proliferation of tools and processes to enable a professional to reflect on their practice. Boud (2010, 29) referred to this shift as "the reflective turn".

Some of the organisational inquiry literature about "turns", illuminated the ways in which a "turn" forms. Simpson's (2009) evolution of the "practice turn" drew comparisons with a different commonly referred to research "turn" dubbed the "paradigm wars" (Anderson and Herr, 1999; Klaes, 2012, 13). Using the term "wars" rather than "turn" highlighted the

contentious nature of this turn which challenged entrenched traditions of undertaking research. The “paradigm wars” involved applying Kuhn’s (1962) concept of paradigm to research practices and generating new ways of undertaking research. It challenged the dominance of the scientific paradigm (positivism) in research practice, and posited limitations and merits of different research methodologies. The debate advocated alternative research paradigms for person-centred inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1982) or research involving humans, and led to new modes of inquiry such as “naturalistic inquiry” (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, 1), “practitioner research” (Stenhouse, 1981, 110; Anderson and Herr, 1999, 12), “reflective practice” (Schön, 1983, 21), “co-operative inquiry” (Heron 1985) and “practice-led inquiry” (Gray, 1996, 1), all of which were viable ways to investigate professional practice. In illuminating the nature of a “turn”, Simpson (2009, 1329) suggested that

*a turn is not just a matter of overthrowing “normal science”; it also opens up new intellectual frontiers, invites new ways of seeing and suggests new questions to be answered. It demands the rigorous contestation of ideas and a deep probing of the philosophical assumptions that shape our intellectual discourses.*

When this type of debate was evident in the discussion of a practice, Simpson (2009, 1330) suggested that it provided evidence of a “turn in progress”.

Reason and Torbett (2001) also referred to the “paradigm wars” to mount their argument for two other “turns” in research practice. Advocating action inquiry, they (2001, 3) described a “linguistic turn” that had swept social science and humanities in the 1960s and drew attention to the value of practitioner inquiry or first-person action inquiry to understand an array of organisational practices. They further referred to “the action turn” which represented a shift towards participatory action inquiry as a means for investigating organizational issues in contrast with the dominance of positivist ways of undertaking organizational inquiry.

### **A new aesthetic turn**

Adler’s (2006) discussion about a trend she had observed in the use of art-based or aesthetic tools to explore strategic and day-to-day management and leadership practices is seen as a starting point for a new conversation and potentially another turn in organizational inquiry. Taylor and Ladkin’s (2009, 56) review of Adler’s (2006) propositions, strengthened with additional references to other similar examples, prompted them to describe the trend as cross fertilisation between the arts and leadership, which they described as

*a fundamentally different way of approaching the world than is embodied in the traditional tools of logic and rationality that have dominated management research and business school education that they align with Aesthetics or the study of sensuous knowing. Typical in the processes underpinning this trend is the use of skills aligned with art practices.*

In the light of Simpson’s (2009) description of “a turn in progress”, this emerging discussion around “aesthetic tools”, particularly phrases such as “a fundamentally different way of approaching the world”, can be seen as an emergent “aesthetic turn”. Taylor and Ladkin (2009) suggested the cross fertilisation between art discourses and management research helped a reader/investigator understand organizational and professional practice ideas.

## Provenance

Adler (2006) and Taylor and Ladkin's (2009) arguments for initially recognition of and then relevance of aesthetic tools in organisational inquiry are developed by drawing attention to features in the organisational inquiry literature. These features, viewed in chronological sequencing, have a similar outcome to the process of Provenance, more recognisable as an aesthetic tool used in the study of artefacts. Horwood (2015, 1) defined Provenance as

*the history of physical possession of a work of art from the date of its creation to the present day. It also reflects changing art taste, collection attitudes, social and political ideologies, and economic trends.*

Provenance involves a range of different processes designed to research an artefact's history and establish its authenticity. The term provenance, nominalised from the French *provenir*, "to come from" (Oxford English dictionary<sup>1</sup>), originated in arts and antiquities discourse in which it referred to the life story of an item or art collection and a record of its ultimate derivation and passage through the hands of its various owners. Although originally restricted to particular aspects of art and antiquity, the term enjoys acknowledgement beyond these restricted disciplines through iconic television programs such as *Antique Road Show*<sup>2</sup> and *Fake or Fortune*<sup>3</sup>. In other disciplines, commentators have used Provenance as a reference point for product quality, for example the quality of food or agricultural produce (Keller and Kollmann, 1999), showing how Provenance has migrated into other disciplines and discourses. When Provenance is applied in organisational contexts, it provides an example of how an art discourse migrates into organizational discourse.

When an artefact is researched, the process often illuminates individual art practices and artist practices through which the artefact is recognised. This process helps to illuminate the aesthetic qualities of the artefact: for example, chemical analysis of paint helps to age a particular art work and brush stroke identification clarifies tools that an artist is likely to have used, thus creating evidence for dating and authorship of particular art works. Turner (1996, v) referred to similar Provenance factors in related "arts" field of literature. He suggested that Literature is conscious of its own heritage and rooted in or reacting against an earlier tradition, is ubiquitous, primarily because the Arts are themselves an expression of human experience. When Turner (1996, v) states that

*The Literary Mind is not a separate kind of mind. It is our mind. The Literary Mind is the fundamental mind,*

he helps us to see the Arts as a vehicle rooted in particular geographical, temporal and societal contexts, through which we can better understand our own human experiences. Two related examples, one in Literature the other in Sculpture, help to crystalize how Provenance contributes to understanding of Art and Art practices and this acts as an aesthetic tool in these art forms.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/provenance> (accessed March 2016)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/glossary/provenance.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2033616/>



## Provenance in Literary Studies

When considering what it is that Literary Studies can bring to bear on more practice-focussed disciplines, it is worth remembering how keenly it looks to both historical and cultural contexts in its attempts to explore literary texts as objects of understanding. Cave (2016, 21), arguing for the value that the precision and rigour of Literary Studies can have when applied to other fields of enquiry, cites its rooting in history as the single most important underlying principle it offers. He states that Literary Studies

*belongs...to history, and must necessarily be conscious of that history, just as it is conscious of the intrinsically historical character of the artefacts that it examines.*

Cave elsewhere elaborated on what a systematic approach to this inherent historicism of Literary Studies might look like, coining the term "pre-history" (1999). By this term, Cave intends an approach which

*has a willingness to listen attentively to what the past has to tell us, always married with a resistance to the idea that the past exists merely as a prelude to the present, as an earlier version of what we are now, or as a time and place concerned with laying the foundations for the future in which we now find ourselves" (Jenkins, 2017, 32).*

In Cave's discussion of history in Literary Studies, we see clear resonances with the idea of Provenance. Ideas, concepts or terms within a literary text can only be fully understood through the tracing of the "pre-history" of those ideas. Cave (2009) marries his Pre-histories approach with the concept of Afterlives, so that as readers we are left at a threshold experiencing "something like a Doppler effect" (Cave, 2009, 143) in which traces surrounding a moving

object will appear differently depending on the position from which they are observed. Thresholds are themselves shifting, thereby disrupting a neat teleological interpretation of the past. The past informs the present, but is not beholden to it.



**Figure 1: Cover piece Divina Commedia**

*Divina Commedia* (Alighieri, 1308) (Figure 1) is an excellent example of this relationship between the past and the present. The text is a pillar of the European literary canon, and as such acts as a useful vehicle through which to explore the notion of Provenance in Literature. Started in 1308 and completed shortly before Dante's death in 1321, the *Commedia* began to make its mark within Dante's own lifetime, but really caught the imagination of writers and artists across Europe in the nineteenth century, when translations of the text became widely available.

Dante's text consciously and deliberately signals the presence of its author, with Dante casting himself as a protagonist within it. However, it is also infused with both clear and more opaque references to Dante's literary predecessors. The most overt example in his *Commedia* is Dante's choice of guide - the Roman poet Virgil. Dante chooses Virgil because he represents the



culmination of classical poetic expression. When he meets Virgil in the opening Canto of *Inferno* Dante pilgrim exclaims

*"Tu se" lo mio maestro e "l mio autore;  
tu se" solo colui da cu' io tolsi  
lo bello stilo che m' ha fatto onore"*

(Alghieri, 1939, 85-87)

[*"Thou art my master and my author. Thou art he from whom alone I took the style whose beauty has brought me honour"* – Sinclair (1939: 27)]

However, even as Dante pays homage to Virgil, so too does he surpass him – as a pre-Christian poet, Virgil is unable to enter Paradise. Elsewhere in Dante's work, we see the poet deliberately listing the Troubadour poets whose literary tradition he inherits and reinvigorates. Dante is, as Barolini (1984, 91) argues, clearly immersed in a lyric tradition which he regards with

*a sense of historical continuity.*

In addition to its inheritance of a clearly defined literary tradition, the *Divina Commedia* also places itself within clear geographical and cultural boundaries. While today we might regard Dante as an Italian poet with influences from the Occitans in the south of France, for a medieval Florentine, the categories of France and Italy simply did not exist. Dante's project is one with the linguistic band running from Italy, across the south of France and into northern Spain. When Dante includes an Occitan quote of Arnaut Daniel in *Purgatorio* XXVI, he signals that all of this region contains his culture, his literature, his history. The Provenance of this text is therefore deeply rooted within its distinct sense of geography and culture.

Central to this project is the language which Dante chooses for his text – the vulgar language of the people – the Florentine dialect which will go on to be considered "Italian". Dante rejects Latin as the only language suitable for literary expression, demonstrating a profound and unshakeable belief in the power and value of his native tongue. Within this newly forming literary space, Dante chooses to express himself through medieval scientific concepts as part of what Alison Cornish (2003, 171) refers to as "Dante's 'vulgarization' of Science". For Dante, Science sits quite naturally within Art. Moreover, as Cornish explains, Dante

*render[s] the concepts and language of natural science useful here, now, for us – or at least for his contemporary readers.*

Exploring a range of disciplines we might regard as falling within the broad category of Science, from meteorology to astronomy to optics, Dante is keen to infuse his text with medieval scientific thought. In *Paradiso II* for example, Dante explores moonspots and various suggested explanations for them. Dante's "Art" is steeped in medieval Science, and the twenty-first century distinction which we now draw between two apparently disparate disciplines would have been entirely alien to him. Such cross-discursive referencing illuminates what is now recognised as a contemporary divide between Science and Art, one which historical examples such as these show as blurred.

### **Provenance in Sculpture**

Rodin's *Gates of Hell* (Figure 2) is a sculptural icon and is one of many well-known works of art produced in the nineteenth century which cite the Dantean *opus*. Rodin cites the *Commedia* directly in the inscription over the Gates with the words



**Figure 2: Gates of Hell – Rodin**

"*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate (Inf. III, 10)* [*"Abandon every hope, ye that enter"* (Sinclair, 1939, 47)]. This citation represents the moment in the *Commedia* at which Dante the pilgrim passes out of the dark wood and into Hell, the dire warning still ringing in his ears. Within his work Rodin depicts the key figures which appear in *Inferno* – Dante in the form of the figure which will become *The Thinker*, Paolo and Francesca who in sculptural terms come to be known as *The Lovers*, and the cannibalistic Count Ugolino featured in *Ugolino and Sons*.

However his representation does not seek to slavishly reproduce Dante's characters. Rather, the figures appear as obscure representations and seem only tangentially related to the text. This apparent distance, however, belies the depths of Rodin's understanding of Dante's work. Taking Rodin's representation of Paolo and Francesca as her case study, Audeh (2011) outlines the painstaking lengths to which Rodin goes in his quest to understand and represent Dante. It is only from this position of a thorough understanding of the mechanisms at work in the *Commedia*, argues Audeh, that Rodin is able to create something which, superficially at least, bears little relationship to the text of its origin. She states (2011, 196)

*[the fact] that Rodin seems to have come upon [the] solution [of] mixing the allegorical and the literal within one sculpted work – and executes it in such a way as to make it appear not at all contrived - is testament to his inclination towards and profound understanding of the Divine Comedy .*

This somewhat ambiguous relationship which Rodin has with Dante is interesting because it forces us to examine in detail the process through which the artist – a sculptor - goes as he seeks to understand the essence of Dante's philosophical and theological thought.

A second example of the Provenance of this sculpture is evident in the exhibition of the larger working of the small icon of three figures that sit on the top of the *Gates*. The Musée Rodin in Paris, France, which displays many of the Rodin sculptures, exhibits *Graces*, the name given to the enlarged version of the small figure on top of the *Gates of Hell*, directly in front of the *Gates*, to thus emphasise the relationship between the two sculptures.

### **Provenance and "Arts" practice**

In the two examples of literature and sculpture we see that Provenance not only provides insights into the art works, they also illuminate the artist practices. Provenance shows how a writer chooses their words to convey important elements of their own background. Seeing, as we can at the Rodin museum, the juxtaposition of the *Gates* and the *Graces*, draws additional attention to the initial relationship, but seeing the *Graces* (Figure 3) in the enlarged form



**Figure 3: Graces – Rodin**

emphasises the nature of this piece in that the same mould was used three times and the same character repositioned to create the triple sculpture. This use of moulds is a key feature in understanding the historical sculpting practice and explains the survivability of this particular sculpture. The preservation of the mould enabled recreation of the original sculpture following its previous destruction during the Second World War.

The adoption of both historical and culture contexts to practice help to advance understanding of the art practices as well as the artefacts of those practice. These examples of Provenance of professional artistic/aesthetic practice create substance

of what it means and meant to be a writer or a sculptor. This consciousness of the artisan to which Cave (2009) refers, is valuable beyond the restrictions of aesthetic work, and adds value to any study of professional arts practice.

### **Provenance and professional practice**

The practice of Provenance can migrate from focussed research into the authenticity of an artefact to illumination of any professional practice. Understanding an artefact's pre-history (Cave, 1999) helps to recognise the choices an art professional makes in the development of their work, and similarly understanding a professional's pre-history provides valuable insights into their contemporary professional practice.

The processes ascribed to Provenance that illuminate artists individual practices can be applied to other professions. If we look to the already referred to texts on professional practice, such as Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933, 271-2), the concept of professional practice in the arts is minimal. They devote a mere two pages to talking about professionalism in this discipline, noting that the intellectual work involved with the arts provides the entrée into describing it as professional. They draw attention to the presence of aesthetics and look at the extent of training and emergence of organisations related to the arts – such as the Royal Academy of Music – that pave the way for these occupations to be seen as professional occupations.

Cave's (1999) coining of the term pre-history to speak to the relationship an artefact's history has with its contemporary out playing, also has relevance for a professional practice. Understanding the pre-history of a practice can often provide evidence of choices made within professional practices that, over time, become the tradition of the practice and thus open themselves to unquestioned acceptance. Once justification for a particular practice or element of a practice is made evident, it makes it easier to evaluate whether the practice or its element should continue. Cave (1999) however issued a caveat to his claim, that we should strive to avoid reading the past as an inevitable march towards the present. When seeking to investigate the Provenance of a particular practice, we should therefore remain aware of our own position *in the present*.

Three examples of Provenance being used to illuminate organizational professional practice are found in Finlay's (2002) discussion of researcher practice, Barrett's (2004) discussion of policy

development practices and Reilly's (2005) discussion of archival practices. Each example makes specific reference to Provenance.

Finlay (2002, 532) uses the term "Provenance" to describe a researcher's "position, perspective, and presence" as they undertake any form of research. She attributes Provenance to her colleague Davies (in Davies, Finlay and Bullman, 2000) who uses Provenance to examine policies that predate and inform a policy under investigation. Davies (2008) suggested that a policy had Provenance in its history leading into a given event, policy or practice and that this Provenance shines a light on the disposition of that event, policy or practice.

Barrett (2004, 249), one of the early U.K. scholars on policy implementation, uses historical reflection of her practice to write a "think piece" that celebrates the development of policy studies in the intervening years since she co-authored/edited a book on policy implementation (Barrett and Fudge, 1981).

*I decided to approach the task by looking back at why I originally became interested in implementation*

Barrett's (2004, 257) Provenance illuminates the changes in the terminology used to refer to change in the public sector – terms such as "reformist", "rolling back the state" and "reinventing government" – and suggests the introduction of these terms provides a way of understanding the ideology associated with public policy and its changes.

Reilly (2005), exploring the role of Provenance for archivists, refers to examples in the arts where provenance has contributed to greater understanding of the professional practice of the artists. Other writers exploring archivist practices make similar comments. Nesmith (2012, 259) discusses

*Perhaps as never before, discussion of archival records and activities is being stimulated through closer examination of them from an unprecedented variety of archival and other scholarly perspectives.*

And later (Nesmith, 2012, 261)

*Conventional archival concepts and practices are undergoing a profound reassessment, due mainly to deepening awareness of the importance and complexity of the history of human recording and archiving and to the postmodern shift. Thinking through this reorientation is the leading item on the profession's overall intellectual agenda. This article is intended to throw light on the agenda taking shape.*

### **Provenance in Organisational inquiry**

The idea of Provenance, although not referred to with that specific label, exists elsewhere in organizational inquiry. Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) referred to the (lack of) *histories* of the professions. More and Rosenblum (1970, 26) used the term *an evolutionary view* as they discussed the history of the notion of professional status. Maturana, (2002, p. 34) described a process of *autopoiesis* that included a question about his own practice asking "how we do what we do". He added (pg 32), that

*...As a result of this fundamental conceptual change, my central theme as a biologist (and philosopher) became the explanation of the experience of cognition rather than reality*

Developing their case for the practice of “agency” within organisational inquiry, Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 964) suggested

*Since social actors are embedded within many such temporalities at once, they can be said to be oriented toward the past, the future, and the present at any given moment, although they may be primarily oriented toward one or another of these within any one emergent situation. As actors move within and among these different unfolding contexts, they switch between (or “recompose”) their temporal orientations—as constructed within and by means of those contexts—and thus are capable of changing their relationship to structure. We claim that, in examining changes in agentic orientation, we can gain crucial analytical leverage for charting varying degrees of manoeuvrability, inventiveness, and reflective choice shown by social actors in relation to the constraining and enabling contexts of action.*

Dillon (2008, 4) similarly drew on his practice histories to give substance to the current reality of his professional practice. He referred to this historicising practice as “*self-reconnaissance*”. Hauw (2009, 342) described the practice of reviewing current practice on the basis of previous history as “*reflection on the pre-reflexive consciousness of past experience*”, and Johns (2010, 14) called it “*fore-having*”. Marshall (2011, 246), in her argument for “auto-ethnography” and “first-person action inquiry” as means for investigating professional practice, located first-person action research within a broader history of action research. She suggested

*This core strand in action research has been strongly influenced by action science (Friedman, 2001). Self-reflective knowing was a key element in Aristotle’s richly discriminating map of ways of knowing (Eikeland, 2001), alongside other forms related to practice of different kinds.*

These comments drew attention to both the past in Aristotle’s writing as well as the recent past in Friedman’s (2001) work. She thus explained first person action inquiry in terms of its history and influencing critical incidents.

Gearty and Coghlan (2017) describe

*A learning history is an action research approach to capturing and stimulating learning from experience. The product that arises from this – the learning history artefact – is sometimes likened to a case study in that it is a written narrative of an organization’s recent experience of critical events, such as a change programme or a product initiative. It is a retrospective account in their own words by the people who initiated, implemented and participated in the events, as well as those affected by them, assisted by external researchers who see themselves as “learning historians”*

The idea of Provenance as a tool to assist practice-led inquiry was first mooted by Hill (2014, 235) in describing *backward looking reconnaissance* in action inquiry, and later applied to a study of facilitation skills that used photographs as catalysts for management conversations (Hill and Lloyd, 2017). Additional examples of Provenance are evident in the introductory sections of this paper, firstly to illuminate the study of professional practice and then to discuss the role of “turns” in the discourse. Simpson (2009) undertook a similar process in establishing the chronology of events leading to the “practice turn”.

These examples of Provenance in practice investigation show how the study of professional practice has changed over time. There has been a shift (or turn) from quantitative ways of investigating practice towards qualitative ways. A second shift is represented in the move from positivist or objective ways of investigating practice towards qualitative or post-positivist ways

of investigating professional practice. One aspect of a post-positivist view of professional practice is consideration that professional practice means different things to different people across different periods of time. The emergence of different epistemological sources for understanding practice, such as different modes of knowledge (Starkey and Madan, 2001) generates a professional practice discourse in which there may be dissonance between academic and practitioner ways of thinking about practice, as well as differences in the language used by different stakeholders to talk about practice. Boud (2010, 30) also identified more recent changes in investigation of professional practice. He signalled emergence of collective rather than as individual study of professional practice; multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary studies; and finally, that professional practice involves collaboration with clients or customers as recipients or foci of professional practice. Another way in which we can see the benefits of Provenance is with the illumination of the changing underlying research questions: from Carr-Saunders and Wilson's (1933) research questions of "what do members of this profession do?" and "how does one become a member of the professions?", to Friedson's (1983) "how and why (profession) members do what work they do the way they do?" As Evetts (2011) and Saks (2014) both argue, discussions around professionalism are long standing and by understanding these histories, one can better understand contemporary issues.

Each of these examples are ways for understanding the nature and value of Provenance in terms of professional practice inquiry within an organizational context. Although predominantly recognisable as an artistic or artefactual process, and as such one of the many that would fall under the category of aesthetic interventions, an application to professional practice reflection is also a useful way to apply Provenance. Such an intervention would logically fall under the umbrella of "the aesthetic turn" in organisational inquiry.

When a professional explores their practice using this aesthetic tool they begin to make the professional practice and their experience of this professional more transparent and as such can begin to see how other choices made under the banner of professional practice can be explained in terms of either the practice's history or the practitioner's history with the practice.

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